

Bush River Community Council

July 16, 2012 Meeting Minutes

The July 2012 meeting of the Bush River Community Council (BRCC) was called to order by the Chairman, Larry Carmichael, at 6:37 p.m. in the Anita C. Light Estuary Center large meeting room, Otter Point Road, Abingdon, MD, on July 16, 2012. Sheriff's Office Lt. Charles Carr, and Corporal Edward Smith from the Harford County Office of the Maryland State Department of Natural Resources were in attendance. Bush River Community Council Board members: Chairman Larry Carmichael, Vice Chairman Randy Conlon, Recording Secretary Mary Starks, Kathleen Leary, Glenn Dudderar, and Jo Wanda Lucas were present. BRCC board members John Paff, and Harry Webster, Jr. were absent from the meeting. One member of the Bush River community attended. No one from the County Council or County government attended. NOTE: BRCC Board has since learned from Councilwoman Lisanti that, unfortunately, there had been an error on the county website indicating the July 16th meeting of the BRCC had been cancelled. Our Council members, their legislative aides and the County Executive's office Representatives have all been extremely consistent in attending in meetings and helpful in supporting the council with problem-solving from the date we began meeting in March 2011. We thank them for past and continued enthusiastic support. In future, we will check the website prior to each meeting to ensure information is correct. BRCC Board.

Chairman Carmichael opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, thanking them for coming and apologizing to Corporal Smith, the guest speaker, for the low turnout. Minutes from the June meeting were approved.

There was a discussion of the BRCC minutes approval process. There must be a balance between assuring accuracy and completeness, and the timely posting of the minutes on the Harford County Website. It was decided that draft minutes would be circulated via email to all members of the board, guest speakers and County Council and County Executive representatives who were present for the meeting. They would be given one week to respond with corrections/approval. Changes determined to be accurate will be promptly incorporated into the draft and if no other feedback is provided to the Secretary by the end of that week, the draft minutes will be approved by the Chairman and the Secretary and submitted to the County Executive representative for posting to the web site as final minutes.

Harford County Sheriff's Report

Lt. Charles Carr, attended in lieu of Lt. Dougherty who had a schedule conflict. He indicated that the status of crime within our community has neither increased nor decreased significantly from the June report. In answer to a question, he said that about the only time weather or seasons seem to have impact on crime is the winter weather when it's cold and icy/snowy. In response to another concern about speeding on Declaration Circle and Church Creek Road in Riverside, there has been difficulty getting support from the County traffic and road safety engineers since the County regulations do not support speed bumps along those roads. He suggested that the Community Association contact the Sheriff's Office Traffic Unit for assistance in implementing "traffic calming" techniques : the number to call is 443-409-3323.

There was a discussion about the \$1,500 fine for littering which warns drivers on signs along Route

543. In answer to a question, there have been citations written for littering; however, the amount of a fine up to that amount is determined at the judge's discretion. Unfortunately, it is difficult to catch people littering and the trash on roads in Harford County continues to be a problem.

In the past, this council has discussed the possibility of increasing the number of speed cameras at busy intersections. It was noted that in Howard County some of the speed cameras are being removed even though citations have decreased. A frustration our law enforcement personnel feel deeply is the leniency provided to speeders (even those cited for excessive speeds) by the judges in Harford County. Motor vehicle Speeding is a cultural issue and as long as people can have their fines reduced by our judges just because they show up in traffic court, the public will not take the speeding laws or fines seriously.

The Chairman asked Lt. Carr if there were an unusually high number of homeless people moving through the county since he has noticed a few groups walking up Route 40 and Route 7. Lt. Carr indicated they had not seen an increase in this activity.

Guest speaker Corporal Edward Smith from Harford County Office of MD Department of Natural Resources

Corporal Smith presented an outstanding briefing on the rules/laws of recreation and commercial fishing in Maryland waters and Bush River in particular. He provided several handouts for additional information. Unfortunately, some of the concerns and issues raised by council members could not be addressed, because the state laws do not support them.

Excessive boat noise, speed, and reckless operation – Some Maryland rivers have been active in getting loudness restricted by laws passed in the state (Deep Creek Lake, Bohemia River, Elk River and Northeast River and its tributaries. Bush River has not. The current law requires that enforcement personnel only test the noise level at idle speed which, of course, is not going to break the 90 decibel limit. Although excessive speed should be an issue, by the time enforcement personnel are on the scene, it is difficult to catch the quicker boats on Maryland waters. Putting other boaters or themselves at risk by irresponsible operation of a boat on Maryland waters can be enforced if complaints are called in and if the operator is still behaving recklessly when enforcement personnel arrive and can observe them. It is unlawful for jet skis to be operated after sunset which is defined as the time when the lights on the buoys go on. There is a buoy over by Flying Point Park on Bush River.

Gill nets are not permitted except in very deep water. The nets residents are seeing in Bush River are either fyke nets or hoop nets. They are designed to be attached to the bottom of the river and guide fish through a series of rings into a box from which they cannot get out. Fishermen are required to check the nets each 24 hour period. Legally, in Maryland, it doesn't matter how many fish die when the tide goes out exposing them to the air and heat as long as the nets have been checked each 24 hours. The nets are set up to catch perch or catfish during each season. The nets can be put in up to a month before the season, but the fisherman cannot check the nets until opening day of the particular season. It is illegal to disguise in any way the registration number on a boat – it must be visible and above the water line at all times. The DNR has a good relationship with the commercial fishermen who currently use nets in Bush River.

Water Fowl hunting , licensing, permits, and laws were described with an emphasis on how to obtain a permit for hunting on the shoreline. Once a permit has been purchased for a specific shoreline, no one else can hunt water fowl in that area up to 250 yards out into the water. Hunting is not permitted within 150 yards of a residence or a building where people are likely to be such as a garage or workshop.

A permit for a shoreline property can be purchased by June 1st of each year...a permit may be purchased for up to 3 years at the end of which time the state will notify the owner to either renew the permit for that site or lose it. The permit must be displayed on a stake in or near the water of the shoreline permit during hunting season. If the June first date is missed, one may go to the Fallston Volunteer Fire Department in Harford County on the 1st Tuesday in August participate in the open permit licensing process to obtain a permit for remaining open areas. After sundown, no hunting is permitted anywhere. Hunters who have a shoreline permit may not park on state or county roads near streams off of Bush River in order to reach their stake. The Licensing and Registration Service Center for Harford County is the Bel Air Regional Service Center 2 S. Bond Street, Suite 101, Bel Air, MD. 410-836-4550.

Corporal Smith provided a very informative and professional briefing. Much more detailed information was provided on these and other topics in handouts on file with the BRCC Board.

Call for Issues

Chairman Carmichael presented a list of the issues and concerns that have been raised and worked on by the BRCC since its inception in March 2011 and asked the board members to comment on them to assure we have a complete list and update any outstanding actions on any of them.

The issue of poor living conditions in the Perrywood Gardens Apartments was again raised. Unfortunately, there are still problems with overflowing garbage dumpsters, bats, bed bugs, broken mail boxes and air conditioners in the complex. The Chairman requested the board member who has been working with the Perrywood Garden community to send her report with the photos to him and he will take it up with the County Executive's office. There was discussion about the need for a "standard of living code" for Harford County that was mentioned in previous meetings. That would permit the county government to address these kinds of issues. It appeared that some of the issues, such as broken mail boxes and overflowing garbage containers could be addressed by the US Postal Service and the county Department of Health.

Chairman Carmichael thanked everyone for coming, reminded everyone that the August 20, 2012 meeting will feature a presentation on the plan to expand bike/walking trails in Harford County by Arden McClune and Paul Magness from County Parks and Recreation Department, and adjourned the meeting at 8:25 pm.

Submitted by:
Mary Starks
Secretary, Bush River Community Council